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The Aligator.

London. Published by Harvey & Darton, 1830.



STORIES OF ANIMALS,

Second Series,

INTENDED FOR

C H I L D R E N

BETWEEN SEVEN AND TEN YEARS OLD.

“Whether with reason or with instinct blest,
Know, all enjoy that power which suits them best.”

POPE.

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STORIES OF ANIMALS.

THE GUACHARO.

CUMANA is the name of one of the provinces of South America: you will find it on the map, between the Caribbean sea and the great river Orinoco. The fertile plains of this country abound in tigers, panthers, and apes; and the forests are filled with rare and beautiful birds. There is one bird which has never been found in any part of the world, except among the mountains of Cumana: it is called

the Guacharo, and is about as large as our fowls. Its plumage is of a dark bluish grey, with small streaks and specks of black; and on its head, wings, and tail, it is marked with large white spots of the shape of a heart. Thousands of these birds live in a curious cave in one of the mountains: they hide themselves in its darkest corners by day, for their eyes cannot bear the light of the sun, and at night-fall they leave the cavern to seek for food. Almost every other night-flying bird is a bird of prey. You know the owls, which you have seen flying across the garden in the dusk of the evening, feed on mice and little birds, but the harmless Guacharo lives only upon hard fruits and seeds.

A few years ago, some travellers thought that they should like to visit the cavern of Guacharo, and try how far they could penetrate into it, for no one has ever yet reached the end of that cave. They were accompanied by some Indians, and the monks of a neighbouring convent, who led them along the banks of a river which rises in the inner part of this vast cavern. The path was winding, and at the last turning they saw before them the immense opening of the grotto. It looked very beautiful, for the rocks were covered with large trees and creeping plants, whose gay flowers hung over the entrance. They still followed the course of the river, and before they had advanced far into the cavern, it became so dark that they

were obliged to light the torches they had brought with them. About the spot where the daylight began to fail, they first heard from a distance the hoarse cries of the birds: as they went on the noise grew louder and louder, and the shrill cries of those who were frightened by the light of the torches, were answered by the plaintive notes of the others that roosted in the distant parts of the cave.

The Indians held up torches fixed on long poles, to show the travellers the nests of the Guacharoes. These were at a great height over their heads, built in holes, with which the roof of the grotto is pierced like a sieve. They wished for a few of the birds, and several times fired their guns when they heard the flapping

of wings. After many fruitless attempts, one of the travellers succeeded in killing two Guacharoes, which, dazzled by the glare of the torches, seemed to follow the party.

The travellers still walked on, following the course of the stream, which rises, as I told you, somewhere in the deep recesses of that vast cavern: sometimes the banks of this underground torrent were so rough and rocky, that they were obliged to descend into its bed, and found the water was not more than two feet deep. At length they came to a spot where the ground rises abruptly, and the stream falls in a cascade from the higher part of the cave. With some difficulty they climbed the little hill which forms

this subterraneous waterfall, and found they could still pass onward: the cavern, indeed, was much lower, but it appeared to extend to a great distance. Anxious to explore it, they continued to advance, making their way through thick mud, and saw that some of the seeds which the birds had brought to feed their young ones, had been dropped on the ground, taken root, and sprung up. These plants looked very curious, for, from having grown in total darkness, their leaves and stalks were quite white, and the shapes of them so strange, that no one could tell what kind of plants they were.

The monks had found great difficulty in persuading the Indians to advance as far as the waterfall, and now nothing

could induce them to go any farther : they thought that if they did they should never come back alive ; and our travellers, sadly vexed and disappointed, were obliged to return with their cowardly guides.

Young Guacharoes have sometimes been caught and carried to Cumana ; but they have never lived many days, for they would not eat the seeds which were offered to them. Either these seeds were different from those the parent birds had been accustomed to bring them, or, perhaps, like the humming-bird, they refuse all food, and pine away in captivity.

From the fat of these birds the Indians obtain a great deal of oil. Once every year, about midsummer, they assemble in

great numbers, and build themselves huts of palm-leaves round the entrance of the cave, where they live till *the oil harvest*, as they call it, is over. They enter the grotto armed with long poles, and knock down the greater part of the nests, while the old Guacharoes, as if to defend their young ones, hover over their heads, uttering terrible cries. The young birds which fall to the ground are killed, and the fat in which they abound is melted in earthen pots over fires of brushwood. In this way so many birds are killed, that the Guacharoes would soon be destroyed, were it not that the Indians are afraid to go far into the cave, and that the same birds build in many narrow crevices of the neighbouring rocks, into which the na-

tives cannot enter if they would. From these small grottoes the great cavern seems to be peopled with new colonies of Guacharoes every year. Thus Providence has provided for the preservation of the species, and taken more care of the poor ignorant Indians than they would of themselves; for in their eagerness for present advantage they forget the future, and would, if it were in their power, soon exhaust the source whence they obtain so advantageous an article of traffic.

Humboldt's Personal Narrative.

THE CROCODILE.

THE Crocodile is an inhabitant of large rivers in many parts of Africa, Asia, and America. When full grown it is of a prodigious size, sometimes being more than twenty-five feet in length. Its back is covered with a curious coat of scales, so hard and strong, that even a musket-ball will make no impression upon it: its mouth is larger and wider than that of almost any other animal, and well furnished with sharp, pointed teeth. These are formidable weapons of destruction to the fish that inhabit the same rivers, and every land animal that comes within its reach.





Page 12

The Crocodile.

You know that when children are about seven years old, their teeth begin to grow loose, and either fall out of themselves, or are removed with very little pain and trouble: the place of these is supplied by new ones, which seem intended to last for the remainder of life, for if they are obliged to be drawn, no others succeed in their places. Many animals, as well as man, have only a single change of teeth; but in the Crocodile there is a continual succession of them, and the manner in which they grow is remarkably suited to the repeated change. Instead of being fixed by fangs in a bony socket like our teeth, those of Crocodiles are ranged in a long furrow on the top of the jaw-bone, in which they seem to be retained by

the pressure of the gum. The broad base of the tooth is hollow in the centre: within this hollow the new tooth is formed, and gradually shoots its point upwards, growing larger and harder, till at length it splits the old tooth, which falls away in pieces; the new one, in its turn, serving as a case to a third, which grows up within it; and this process is said to be carried on during the whole life of the Crocodile.

You will not be surprised that the natives are greatly afraid of these terrible creatures; and, indeed, it is very hazardous to ramble in the marshy places, or to bathe in the rivers they frequent. The danger is frequently unseen till it is too late to escape it, for the Crocodile will

often lie concealed by the edge of the water, and there wait patiently till some animal comes down to drink. If a dog, or bull, or tiger, or some unfortunate man, should happen to approach the spot, the Crocodile springs upon him and drags him into the river. It generally drowns its prey by sinking with it to the bottom of the stream, but sometimes loosening its hold, the poor wounded creature is flattered with a hope of making its escape: however, its enemy will pursue, and often take it a second time.

We are told by a traveller, M. Humboldt, that these monstrous reptiles abound in the South American rivers; and when, in the rainy season, these rivers overflow their banks, the Crocodiles are often left

in the pools formed in the neighbouring plains or savannahs by the inundation. As the pools become dried up by the heat of the sun, these animals, which are too indolent to leave them and return to the river, bury themselves in the mud, and remain in a state of torpor or summer sleep till the return of the rains.

A hut or sort of shed was shown to M. Humboldt, which had been the scene of an extraordinary adventure. As a gentleman of the country was sleeping, with one of his friends, on a bench covered with leather, under the shelter of this hut, he was awakened early in the morning by violent shakes and a horrible noise. Clods of earth were thrown from under the bed into the middle of the

hut, and a young Crocodile of two or three feet long soon made its appearance. It darted at a dog which was lying by the door, but happily missed him in its haste, and ran towards the river. The gentleman and his friend easily discovered the cause of all this disturbance ; the hut had been built at the edge of one of the pools I told you of, and when they examined the ground where the bedstead had been placed, it was found to be dried mud, which had covered the Crocodile in its summer sleep. They supposed that it had been awakened by the noise of men and horses, or perhaps by the smell of the dog.

The Crocodile is seldom known to leave the water, except in search of food, or

when the female comes to the shore to lay her eggs. Her nest is a hole in the sand, near the bank of some river; and after carefully covering her eggs with sand, she leaves them to be hatched by the heat of the sun. About the time of their quitting the egg she returns to her nest, and calls her young ones, who answer to her voice, and they are often assisted by her in getting out of the ground.

The young Crocodiles are exposed to many dangers: in the water they are pursued and devoured by large fishes, and on the shore they are often attacked by vultures. More than forty little Crocodiles of about fifteen or twenty days old were collected by M. Humbolt. He kept them in a large court, where for several

mornings he watched their contests with the vultures, and he tells us it was curious to see the address with which the little creatures would defend themselves for some time. As soon as they saw the enemy they would raise themselves on their fore-paws, and, lifting up their heads, open their wide jaws to show their teeth, which even while they are so young are very long and sharp. But the vultures helped each other; for while one engaged the whole attention of a young Crocodile, another would pounce upon it from behind, seize it by the neck, and carry it off through the air.

Some affecting stories were related to this traveller of African slaves who had risked their own lives in attempting to

save their masters when attacked by Crocodiles. An instance of this had occurred a few years before he visited South America. A Negro, hearing the cries of his master, and guessing the cause, ran instantly to the river armed with a long knife. He plunged into the water, and by putting out the eyes of the Crocodile, forced it to let go its prey ; but the faithful slave was too late, for though he succeeded in carrying his dying master to the shore, every effort to restore him to life was found useless. The children of this unfortunate man were poor themselves, but they felt so grateful to the Negro for what he had done to save their father, that they gave him his freedom.

I dare say you will think it very strange

that the Negro should have thought of putting out the eyes of the Crocodile, but in countries where such dreadful creatures are found, the natives often talk to each other about the best way of defending themselves from their attacks. You know that the back of the Crocodile is covered with hard scales, but its eyes, and the skin of its throat, are very tender, and the knowledge of this has saved the lives of many poor Indians and Negroes. I will tell you how a young Indian girl escaped from the jaws of a Crocodile by her courage and presence of mind. When she was seized by the monster, there was no one within reach to assist her; she was dreadfully hurt too, yet in the midst of her pain and alarm, she remembered what

she had often been told, and tried to find the eyes of the Crocodile: she pushed her fingers into them with such violence, that the pain obliged it to let her loose. It had bitten off part of her arm, but the poor girl contrived to reach the shore in safety, by swimming with the hand she still had left.

There are several ways of taking Crocodiles. In some places they are hunted with dogs, which are trained for the purpose, and armed with spiked collars. In the island of Java, they are sometimes caught with a hook fastened to a cord made of loosely twisted cotton: this sort of line is used by the Javanese, because, as soon as the Crocodile has swallowed the hook, he tries to bite asunder the

cord, and his teeth, instead of dividing the loose cotton rope, only pass between its fibres, and all the captive's attempts to bite it in two are vain. When once secured in this manner, he may be safely attacked and destroyed.

The natives of Siam take them in nets, by placing three or four across a river, so that if the Crocodile should break through the first, he may be caught in one of the others. When he feels himself fastened, he begins to lash the water with his enormous tail ; the natives wait patiently till he is quite spent with his struggles, and then come up in boats, and kill him by piercing the tender parts of his body with spears.

We are told that a Negro will some-

times venture to go into the water, and attack a Crocodile, armed only with a knife. He wraps his left hand and arm round with thick leather, and takes the knife in his right hand. As soon as the animal approaches him, he puts out his left arm, which it directly seizes in its mouth, but its sharp teeth do not bite through the tough leather covering, and the Negro kills it by stabbing it in the throat, where the skin is very tender.

Bingley's Animal Biography.

Ure's Geology.

Humboldt's Personal Narrative.

THE ALLIGATOR.

THERE is a very great resemblance between the Crocodile and the Alligator, both in form and habits. The principal difference appears to be in the greater smoothness of the head and neck of the latter, and in the greater width of its snout. It is rather inferior in size, but quite as formidable and rapacious.

Like the Crocodile it will lie concealed among the reeds, on the banks of lakes and rivers, to surprise cattle; and it will often float on the surface of the water, where it appears very much like an old dirty log of wood or a tree. This is an

artifice by which it deceives fish or turtle, and gains an opportunity of suddenly catching and devouring them.

Alligators also lay their eggs in the sand, and leave them to be hatched by the warmth of the sunbeams. A traveller once, in the Island of Ceylon, observed on the banks of a lake some broken fragments of the shells, and his curiosity was excited by a noise, which appeared to proceed from the ground. He began to remove the sand, and soon discovered several little Alligators just hatched, and many eggs, which were still entire. He broke the shell of one of these, and a young Alligator came out; it seemed perfectly formed, and already possessed of the instincts of its species. When the

traveller touched it with a stick, it appeared angry, and bit it violently. It then ran towards the water, thus seeking refuge in its proper element. What a remarkable instance of the manner in which those instincts necessary for the preservation of life, have been implanted by God in the creatures he has formed ! Here is a little animal, deserted by its parents, born in the sand, yet knowing that the water is its proper habitation. Without this knowledge, it must have perished, but the Creator has given it powers adequate to its wants, and supplied it with means of defending itself and attacking its enemies.

Crocodiles and Alligators are both found in South America, and, I believe,

both called Cayman by the natives, but this name more properly belongs to the Alligator.

I have heard of an English gentleman, who was so fond of natural history, that he lived for a great many months in the woods of South America, where he employed his time in observing the habits of the animals that surrounded him, and in collecting and stuffing the beautiful birds of the country. He wished very much to have a stuffed Cayman also, but as they were not to be found in those parts, he was obliged to go to a distant river to look for one.

After a long journey he reached the place where the Indians, who accompanied him, said he would be sure to find a

Cayman. The little party hung the hammocks they had brought with them to the trees, and collected some dry wood to make a fire; they did not need a fire in that hot country to keep them warm, but they always lighted one to frighten away the wild beasts. They then baited a shark-hook with a large fish, and put it upon a board, that it might float on the water; one end of a strong new cord was secured to the hook, and the other fastened to a tree on the bank. The sun had set before all this was done, and they began to hear the cries of the wild beasts of the forest. Above all other sounds they could distinguish that made by the Caymen: it was like a suppressed sigh, but so loud, that it might have been heard a mile off.

While they were at supper, one of the Indians said he saw a Cayman coming. The English gentleman looked towards the place: it was bright moonlight, and he could see every object distinctly. There was something on the water like a black log of wood, but it so little resembled any thing alive, that he thought the Indian was mistaken. The man smiled, and said he was sure that it was one, for he had seen a Cayman before. At last it approached the bait, and they saw the board on which it was put begin to move: they watched the creature open its huge jaws and take the bait into its mouth, but when they pulled the rope, the Cayman dropped the bait, and immediately drew back.

In about half an hour it again ap-

proached and took hold of the bait, but did not swallow it; and directly the rope was pulled, it let go its hold and retreated. This happened several times, till at last they were quite tired out, and laid down in their hammocks to sleep. In the morning they found that the Cayman had contrived to get the bait off the hook, though it had been tied on with string.

For four nights they set their hook, and every morning found their bait gone, but still no Cayman was caught.

The gentleman now felt sure that their plan must be a wrong one, and the party went in search of an Indian settlement not far off. When they had found the Indians, they showed one of them the shark-hook. He shook his head and

laughed at it, telling them it would not do; that when he was a boy he had seen his father catch a Cayman, and the next day he would make a proper hook.

The Indian's hook was very simple: it was made of four pieces of tough hard wood, a foot long, and barbed at both ends. These were tied round the end of a rope, so that the four sticks met in a point at one end, and at the other spread out at equal distances round the rope. Now if the Cayman swallowed this, the more he should pull to get away, the faster it would hold him. This hook was well baited with flesh, and, by means of a stick driven into the bank, hung over the river, just above the water; the end of the rope being fastened to a tree.

Early in the morning the Indian slipped away quietly to visit his bait, and when he reached the place, gave a shout of joy, which quickly brought every one to the spot.

They found a Cayman, ten feet and a half long, fast to the end of the rope. The question now was, how to get him on shore. The gentleman wished to draw him by the rope quietly out of the water, and then to secure him ; but the Indians stared at the proposal, and said they would have nothing to do with such an attempt, for the Cayman would hurt some of them, and asked if they might first shoot a dozen arrows into him, to disable him. As this would have spoiled the skin which the gentleman

wanted to stuff, he would not consent to it, and after thinking for some time, he desired them to fetch the mast of his canoe. This was eight feet long: he rolled the sail round the end of it, and told the Indians, that if they would pull the Cayman out of the water, he would kneel down on the sand, and hold the mast ready to push down its throat, if necessary. When they found they should have the Englishman between themselves and the danger, the Indians cheerfully agreed to do as they were asked. They pulled the Cayman to the surface of the water; he plunged furiously, and on their slackening the rope a little, he went below again. They soon drew him to the shore, and the gentleman, as soon as he saw

the Cayman within two yards of him, dropped the mast, sprung up, and jumped on the animal's back. He then seized and secured its fore-legs, by twisting them over its shoulders. When first pulled out of the river the creature had seemed frightened, but now it recovered from its surprise, and began to plunge violently, and lash the ground with its immense tail. The delighted Indians were so noisy in their joy, that it was some time before the gentleman could make himself heard. He was afraid that, if the rope should break, he and the Cayman might roll back together into the river, and he called to the Indians to drag them further upon the land. Spent by his repeated attempts to regain his liber-

ty, the captive was at length quiet, and his jaws and fore-feet were safely tied up; and after another severe struggle for the mastery, he was carried to the place where he was killed.

Shaw's Zoology.

Davy's Salmonia.

Waterton's Wanderings in South America.

THE JAGUAR.

THE Jaguar is often called the South American Tiger, and is found in the hottest parts of that vast continent. It is not so beautiful an animal as the Tiger of Bengal; the colour of its skin is not so bright, and instead of regular stripes, it is marked with streaks and spots of black. Like the royal Tiger it is said to lie in wait for its prey, and is dreaded by the natives as a fierce and destructive creature. It passes the day in caverns among the rocks and mountains, and at night comes forth to hunt for prey, when it prowls round the villages and farm-

houses, and carries off any animal it can find.

The Jaguar is fond of taking up its abode among deserted ruins; and it is safer for travellers to sleep in the open air by large fires, than to seek the shelter of empty huts. An Indian, once, on returning to his cabin after the rainy season, found that one of these animals, with her young, had taken possession of it: it was no easy matter to dislodge them, and was not accomplished without an obstinate battle.

While M. Humboldt was in this country, he sometimes, on account of the extreme heat, rested by day and travelled by night. On one of these journeys he and his companions were passing near

the foot of some mountains: the night was gloomy, and the road was overhung by lofty trees. Just at the place where the bushes were thickest, their horses were frightened by the yell of a large Jaguar. He was told, that for three years this creature had haunted the mountains, and had become the terror of the neighbourhood, carrying off the horses and mules of the natives even from the midst of their enclosures. The boldest hunters had been sent out to destroy it, but it had always escaped from their pursuits. It now followed our travellers, but without venturing to attack them, though sometimes they could catch a glimpse of it in the openings between the bushes.

The natives told M. Humboldt that the

old Jaguars which have been used to hunting by night for prey, grow so cunning, that they often succeed in carrying off animals from a resting-place without awaking the travellers, seizing them by the neck so as to prevent or stifle their cries. In this way M. Humboldt lost a favourite dog, which had long followed him, and escaped many dangers. One morning it was missing; and as, during the night, they had heard the Jaguars howling around, they had no doubt it had been carried off by them.

As this traveller was descending one of the great rivers of Caraccas in a canoe, he saw a very large Tiger lying under the shade of a mimosa: it had killed a chiguiré, but had not yet begun to devour

its prey, and a flock of vultures had assembled in hopes of sharing the remains of the feast. Sometimes these birds would approach very near, but if the Jaguar moved or looked up, they instantly drew back. M. Humboldt thought he should like to watch them more closely, and getting into the little boat belonging to the canoe, rowed nearer to the beach. The noise of the oars roused the Tiger, and he slowly retreated among the bushes. Directly he was out of sight, the vultures pounced upon the chiguire; but they were soon disturbed, for the Tiger returned, lashing his tail with rage: he leaped into the midst of them, and carried off his prey to the forest.

A few days after this M. Humboldt was

himself in great danger from one of these animals. His companions were busily employed in preparing dinner, and he went by himself along the beach to look at some crocodiles that were sleeping in the sunshine. Some little herons, as white as snow, were sporting about, and even walking over the backs and heads of the slumbering crocodiles, as fearlessly as if they had been so many trunks of trees. At last, M. Humboldt saw on the sand the prints of a Tiger's footsteps, and when he looked in the direction they seemed to take, to his surprise and dismay, he beheld a huge Jaguar lying under a cotton-tree, within a few yards of him. He was very much alarmed, but he had too much presence of mind to run away:

he remembered how the Indians had often told him to act, and walked on quietly without moving his arms. The Jaguar seemed to be watching some animals that were crossing the river, and took no notice of M. Humboldt, who often longed to look behind him, that he might be certain he was not pursued. When he got to some distance he quickened his pace; and reached his companions quite out of breath. The Indians, when they were told of his adventure, loaded their guns, and went back with him to the place where he had seen the Jaguar, but it was gone, and they did not think it prudent to pursue it into the forest.

These creatures may be tamed when kept in confinement, and though, in their

wild state, they are fierce and cruel, yet they do not always display these qualities. When at the village of Atures, on the banks of the Orinoco, the same traveller was told that not long before his arrival, as two little Indian children were sitting on the grass near the village, a Jaguar came out of the forest, bounded towards them, and, instead of attacking, began to play with them: sometimes it hid itself in the high grass, and sometimes it jumped forward, curling itself round like a cat. At last it proved rather a rough playfellow, and gave the little boy some blows on his head with its paw: it struck harder and harder, till, wounded by the claws of the animal, the child's head began to bleed very much.

When his little sister saw this, she took the branch of a tree and drove the Jaguar away. Some of the Indians, who came up on hearing the cries of the children, saw it bound off to the forest, and were very much surprised that so fierce an animal should suffer itself to be struck by a little girl, and run away from her, without trying to revenge itself.

Shaw's Zoology.

Humboldt's Personal Narrative.

THE SEAL.

OF all the animals which are found in the Northern Seas, none are more useful to the inhabitants of those desolate coasts than Seals. Indeed, I do not know what would become of the poor Greenlander without them, for every part of the Seal contributes in some way or other to his support and comfort. The flesh supplies him with the greater part of his food. Of the fat he makes oil for his lamps and fires in the long dark winter night. The skins are made into coverings for his bed, his tent, and his boats, and also into clothes for himself, his wife, and children.



Page 46

Seals.

Even the thread to sew these clothes is obtained from the Seal, by dividing the fibres of its sinews. You may easily imagine how anxious the Greenlanders are to excel in catching these useful creatures, and they are carefully trained to this employment from their childhood.

The Seal is very useful, but it is an ugly, clumsy animal, with a large round head, short legs, and webbed feet. I do not think you would much like such a favourite, but I have heard that, if they are taken young, they can be tamed ; they will even come when they are called by name, and follow their master about like a dog.

A young Seal was once taken at a short distance from the sea ; it was com-

monly kept in a vessel of salt-water, but sometimes it would crawl about the house, and come to the fire-side. This Seal was fed with its natural food, and grew so tame, that though it was taken to the sea every day, and put out of the boat into the water, it did not try to escape. It would swim after the boat, and always suffered itself to be taken into it, and carried home again.

Seals are amphibious animals, that is, they live partly in the water and partly on the land. Their homes are in hollow rocks and caves by the sea-side. They always swim with their heads out of water, and in summer they are very fond of lying on the rocks, and basking in the sun.

Some years ago a farmer in Scotland, who lived near the Frith of Forth, went out to look for lobsters and crabs, which he expected to find among some rocks on the shore. I do not know whether he found any, but he caught a young Seal, and brought it home with him. He gave it some pottage and milk, which the Seal seemed to like very much, and he fed it in this way for three days. The man's wife, however, was not pleased with the company of her new visitor, and begged that it might not stay any longer. Accompanied by some of his neighbours, he took the Seal back, and threw it into the sea; but though this was done several times, it always came out again and returned to them. At last they agreed that the

tallest man of the party should take the Seal, and walk out into the sea as far as he could before he threw it in; and that they should all hide themselves behind a rock at some distance. But the Seal was grown so fond of its master, that it swam to the shore again, and soon found out the men in their hiding-place. Its perseverance quite overcame the farmer's resolution to part with it, and he took it home with him.

There are very few animals which are not grateful for kindness, and capable of feeling attachment towards those from whom they receive it. If love and gratitude are thus instinctive in the brute creation, how much more strongly should they be felt by those who have the gift

of reason, and are therefore able to understand as well as to feel the benefits conferred upon them. The Seal was attached to the farmer, who kindly supplied its wants ; how much greater then should be your gratitude for the affectionate and watchful care of your parents, and above all towards that gracious Being, who has implanted in their hearts such anxious tenderness, and to whose love and mercy you are indebted for every blessing you enjoy.

Bingley's Animal Biography.

THE AMAZON ANT.

You have often heard of Ants ; and you know how kind they are in helping each other, and how they live together in their curious nests. There are several kinds of Ants, and a gentleman called M. Huber, was very fond of watching them, and observing their different habits. He found one kind which he called *Amazon Ants*, from their warlike dispositions ; they never go in search of food, nor even take care of their young ones. The Ants you commonly hear of are all very industrious little insects, and as the Amazons are so different in their habits, I think you

would like to know something about them.

One evening M. Huber was walking near Geneva in Switzerland, and he saw a great many of these Ants crossing the road. They marched very quickly, and went through a thick hedge into a field. He followed them, and the little creatures went on till they came to a nest of the dark Ash-coloured Ants. Some of these were guarding the entrance of the nest, and they soon gave the alarm to those inside it, who came out in great numbers. The Amazon Ants attacked them very fiercely, and after a short battle overpowered them, and drove them back into the bottom of their nest. The victorious Ants then went into the nest

of those they had beaten, and in a very few minutes came out again, carrying in their mouths the young of the Ash-coloured Ants, which were just hatched, and looked like little maggots.

Now I dare say you wonder very much what these Ants were going to do with their little captives, and I believe M. Huber did the same, for the next morning he went to look for their nest. He soon found one, out of which came a great many Amazon Ants. He watched them and saw them go and attack a nest of the Ash-coloured Ants, as they did the evening before, and come back with the young maggots. When they came home loaded with their spoil, some Ash-coloured Ants came out to meet them, and helped them

to carry the little maggots into the nest. This made him very curious to find out more, and he opened one of the nests, and found it full of the Amazon and Ash-coloured Ants living together in the greatest peace and harmony. At last he discovered that the young Ash-coloured Ants became the servants of the little warriors, built their nests, took care of their young ones, went in search of food for the whole colony, and even carried the Amazons about and fed them.

M. Huber sometimes put food, small caterpillars, honey, or fruit, before the Amazons, but they would never touch it. On the contrary, the little Ash-coloured labourer would eat or carry it away directly. He watched them very closely

but he could never find out that the Amazon Ants took any food, except from the mouths of their little friends.

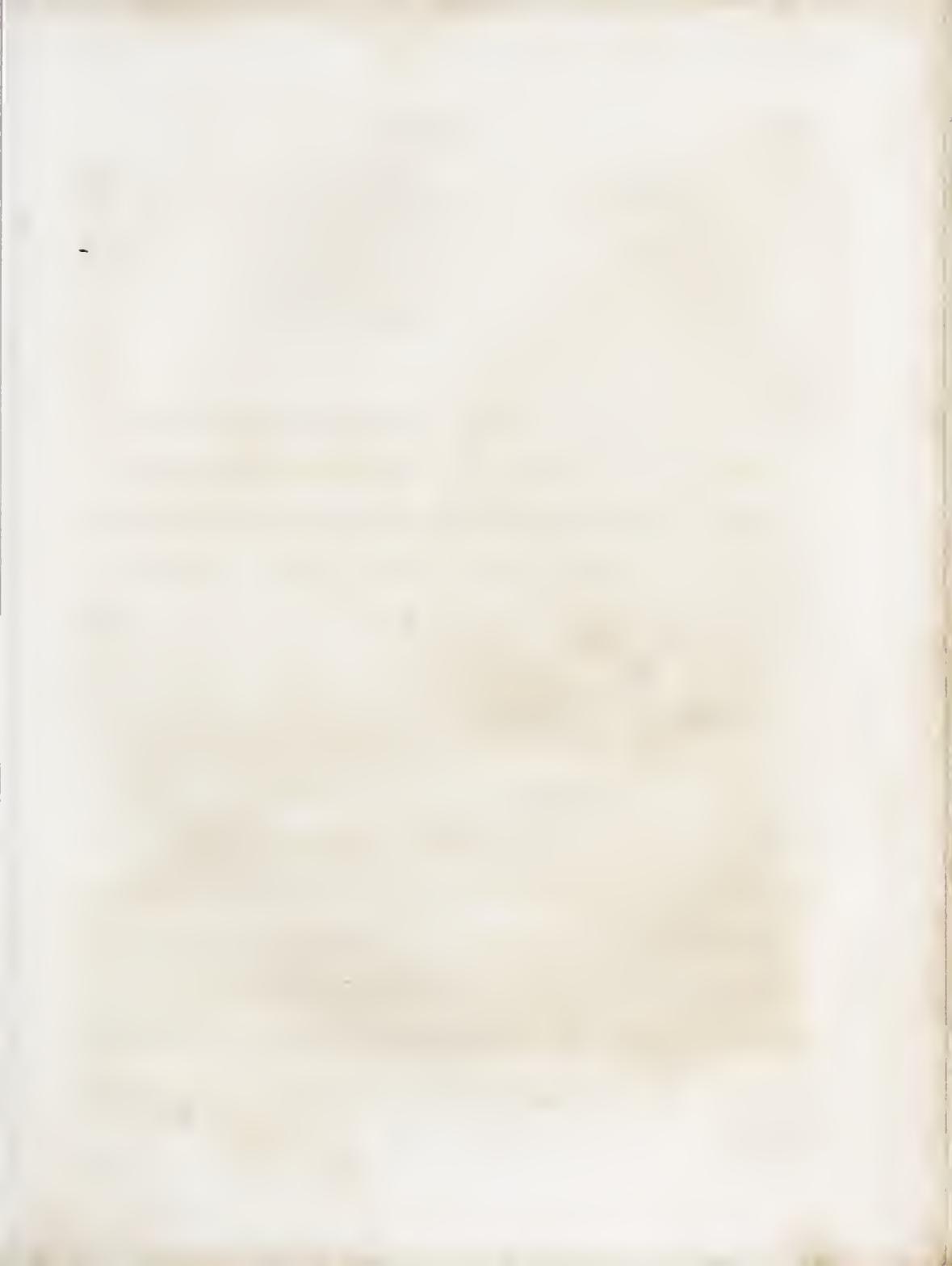
He however determined to see whether the Amazon Ants were really unable to take care of themselves. He took a glass box, covered the bottom with earth, and put some honey into one corner of it. He then shut up in this box thirty of the Amazons, with some of the maggots both of the Amazon and Ash-coloured Ants. For a little while they took some notice of the young ones and carried them about, but they soon laid them down again. Before two days were past, more than half of the Ants died of hunger, and those which were alive were so weak they could scarcely move. M. Huber

pitied the poor little creatures, and put one of their friends, the Ash-coloured Ants, into the box. You would think that one little Ant could not do much, but the industrious labourer soon built a cell in the earth at the bottom of the box, and carried all the maggots into it; it also fed the Amazons that were still alive, which quickly recovered their strength.

Huber's Natural History of Ants.

THE WOLF.

THE Wolf is something like a dog, but is larger and stronger. The shape of his head is very different, and the position of his eyes give him a look of savage cunning: his jaws and teeth are large, and his tail long and bushy. His appetite for food is so ravenous, that he is constantly prowling about in search of prey, and will follow other creatures in the hope of sharing what they have killed. It is said that travellers have seen him engaged in severe contests with vultures and eagles, for the prey which they had seized and were about to devour. He is





such an object of dread, that all wild animals fly at his approach; and as these often escape by their greater swiftness, he is driven to the greatest extremity, and sometimes quite starved.

Though naturally a coward, hunger renders him fierce and bold, and he ventures to attack those animals which are under the care of man. This most frequently happens in cold weather, when the ground is covered with snow. Wolves then brave every danger, and uniting in large packs, enter the villages, and attack the sheep-folds: they dig the earth away from under the doors, and kill every creature they find. It is said that the horse is the only tame animal which can defend itself from them; others fall an easy

prey; women and children, and even men, have on these occasions become the victims of their fury.

A long while ago, when England was thinly peopled, great part of the country, instead of being divided into meadows and corn-fields, was overspread with forests, which afforded secure retreats to many wild animals. Wolves, in particular, became so numerous that they were quite a scourge to the country, doing so much mischief, especially in the winter, that the people used to call January *wolf-month*. I have heard there were so many in Yorkshire, that at Flixton a place of retreat was built, into which travellers might escape when they were attacked by them.

There lived at that time in England a king named Edgar. He was a very active, courageous prince, and he determined to free his subjects from these ravenous animals. For this purpose he used often to go out hunting, sometimes riding in one direction, sometimes in another. A great many Wolves were destroyed in this way, but still many escaped, and fled to the rugged mountains and thick forests of Wales, where neither Edgar nor any of his horsemen could follow them. No doubt king Edgar was vexed when he found the Wolves were gone quite out of his reach; but, after considering awhile, he thought that though his own boldness and skill in hunting were no longer of any use, yet still it

might be possible to induce others to carry on the war against the Wolves.

It had long been the custom for the inhabitants of Wales to pay every year to the king of England a certain sum of money. Edgar sent word to the Welsh princes that he would not require them to pay the money any longer if, instead of it, they would punctually send him every year the heads of three hundred Wolves. The Welsh princes were very glad to agree to these conditions: they sent their vassals about among the rocks and woods, and the most solitary places in the mountains—all were active, and anxious to kill the appointed number of Wolves, that their heads might be sent to king Edgar; and such was the dili-

gence used in hunting them, that the whole race of these mischievous creatures was gradually destroyed.

In North America, where Wolves are very numerous, large herds of moose and red-deer are often seen grazing on the extensive plains. They are very swift animals, and though the Wolves would be glad to catch them, they are inferior to them in speed. In order, therefore, to accomplish their purpose, they are obliged to have recourse to cunning. The wide plains I have just mentioned are often bounded by cliffs or rocky precipices, and when the deer are quietly feeding, a pack of Wolves will collect and surround them on all sides, except that of the precipice. They creep towards them at

first very slowly and silently, that the deer may not be frightened too soon; but when they think that they have quite hemmed in their unsuspecting prey, they approach more quickly, and terrify them by such hideous yells, that the poor creatures seeing the Wolves on every side *except one*, run in that direction. Now you know the side which is left open is that of the precipice. The pursuers then advance rapidly, and the frightened deer that are behind urge on those in the front of the herd, till they are all driven over the precipice and killed by the fall. The Wolves then come down, and devour the mangled bodies at their leisure.

Some years ago Captain Franklin, and several other Englishmen, undertook a

very long and dangerous journey in North America. They travelled through immense forests; and the country being covered with snow, when they stopped to rest for the night, they were obliged to make a very large fire to keep themselves warm. They used often to hear the Wolves howling all round them, but they did not venture to come near the fires. The travellers were accompanied in this journey by several Indians and two Esquimaux; and one day when they came near to that part of the country where some tribes of Esquimaux lived, they sent those who were with them to look for their countrymen. The night came on, and the two men did not return. Captain Franklin and his friends were very

uneasy about them, as they were not sure that the strange Esquimaux would receive them in a friendly manner, so they took it by turns to watch for them. Well, one of the Englishmen, Dr. Richardson, was sitting to watch on the top of a hill, near the brink of a precipice at the bottom of which was a river. He sat there till it was quite dusk, when he thought he heard an indistinct noise behind him; he looked round, and saw nine white Wolves which had formed half a circle round him. I suppose they intended to drive him over the precipice as they do the poor deer, but when Dr. Richardson got up, they stopped: he advanced towards them with his gun in his hand and they made way for him, and he walked down to the

tents where he had left his friends, without their attempting to hurt him.

While another of the party was watching, he several times saw the Wolves on the top of the hill, and once they succeeded in driving a deer over the precipice; however, the animal was not killed but only stunned by the fall, and it got up, swam across the river, and escaped.

Bewick's History of Quadrupeds.

Hume's History of England.

Franklin's Journey.

Foreign Field Sports.

THE OTTER.

You have heard of animals kept and trained by men for the purpose of assisting them in hunting, but perhaps you do not know that one of the wild animals of our own country has often been tamed and employed in fishing. The Otter is also a native of almost every other part of Europe, and of the cold northern regions of Asia and America. Its general food is fish, and it can remain for a long while under the water in pursuit of prey. Not only is this creature gifted with a power so requisite for its mode of life, but its feet and legs are formed for swimming as



Page 68

The Otter.

well as walking ; the toes are joined together by broad strong webs, and the legs are so loosely united to the body, and so placed, that in the water they answer the purpose of fins.

The Otter inhabits the banks of rivers and lakes, and forms its underground dwelling with great care and skill. It always makes the entrance of its hole under the water and works upwards to the surface of the ground, where a *very* small opening admits the air ; and that its retreat may not be discovered, the animal contrives to form this little air-hole in the midst of a thick bush. But its burrow is not yet complete, for, as the entrance is under the water, if a flood should cause the stream to rise the lower

part of its habitation would be overflowed. To provide against this danger, the ingenious Otter makes several lodges or little chambers in the upper part of the dwelling, that it may always have a dry sleeping-place.

In the cold parts of America, these animals, like foxes, change their colour in the winter from brown to white. Here they are sometimes seen in the woods and on the plains, at a distance from any stream or piece of water, but no one has found out why they go, or how they live there. If the Indians pursue them, and the snow is deep and light, they dive into it and run along beneath it; the hunters, however, can easily trace them by watching the motion of the snow as they move

under it, and in spite of their ingenuity they are soon overtaken and killed.

The Otter, in its wild state, sometimes fishes alone, and sometimes in company ; if by itself, it either hunts the fish into some corner of a pond or lake and there catches them, or it attacks its prey by surprise from below, for the eyes of fishes are so placed that they cannot see what is under them. If two Otters happen to be fishing together, they are often heard to make a signal to each other, something like a loud whistle. When a salmon is attacked by two at the same time, one will get before and the other behind it, and they chase it about, till, completely wearied, the poor creature ceases to attempt escape and becomes an easy prey.

When taken young, Otters may be rendered extremely tame, and will become very active and useful, but it generally requires a great deal of patience and perseverance to train them properly. They are first taught to fetch and carry like dogs, and for this purpose a piece of leather, stuffed with wool, and made into the shape of a fish is employed. This they are by degrees accustomed to hold in their mouths, to drop at a word of command, to run after when thrown forward, and bring back again to their master. Real fish are then used, first dead and then living ones, and thus the animal gradually learns all its master wishes. An Otter thus educated is highly valued, and one has been known

to catch fish enough to support a whole family.

A gentleman who had heard of Otters being employed in fishing, could not credit the report; and to satisfy himself he procured a young one, and found, to his great surprise, that after a little instruction it would run to a small river near the house, and scarcely ever return without a live fish in its mouth. It became so very tame that, however far it went, it regularly returned of its own accord to its kennel.

One of these creatures, which was often employed in fishing, would sometimes catch eight or ten salmon in a day. When it came out of the water with the fish, if not prevented, it would try to break it asunder, and as fast as one fish

was taken away it would instantly dive for more. This Otter, when at any time it was alarmed by the approach of dogs, would jump into its master's arms for protection.

A person named Collins, who lived in Northumberland, had a tame Otter which used to follow him like a dog; and when he indulged it by taking it to fish in the river, always returned to its master. One day, when Collins was from home, his son took the Otter down to the water, but when he called it, the animal would not come back to him and was lost. His father was very much vexed at this, and for several days they endeavoured in vain to find the Otter; at last Collins being near the spot where his son had missed it, and calling the creature by its name,

beheld, to his great joy, his favourite come creeping to his feet with every mark of affection for its master.

Another person who kept one of these tame Otters, frequently took it out with his dogs. It was useful to him by going into the water and driving trout and other fish into the nets. But its master parted with it, for he was fond of hunting wild Otters as well as of fishing, and he found that the dogs which had been accustomed to hunting them, not only lived very harmoniously with their singular companion, but would never hunt any wild Otter as long as the tame one remained with them.

Shaw's Zoology.

Bingley's Animal Biography.

THE ELECTRICAL EEL.

DID you ever receive an *electrical shock*? If you have not, I am afraid I cannot give you a clear notion of that strange feeling; it is not quite like a blow, but it comes just as suddenly, and makes one start, and feel an odd kind of thrilling numbness. However, nothing but actually experiencing this sensation can give a correct idea of it.

Perhaps you may wish to know the cause which produces such effects. I will tell you as well as I can. You know we cannot see the air, though we live in it, and breathe it, and if we were deprived

of it only a few minutes we should die. Though air is invisible, we know that it is *a substance* by its effects; we can take an empty bladder and fill it with air, till it becomes quite hard, and you may kick it about and play at foot-ball with it.

Well, there appears to be another invisible substance, called *the electric fluid*. The earth, and all the bodies with which we are acquainted, contain a certain portion of it, and by proper means we can collect it from them as easily as we can take water out of a river. Under particular circumstances, the electric fluid emits a very brilliant light: when it appears among the clouds we call it *lightning*, and when it thus flashes into dazzling splendour, it is often accompanied

by that loud *report* or sound we call thunder.

By a machine contrived for the purpose, we can collect a considerable quantity of the electric fluid; we can cause it to emit a brilliant light and loud report; and if any person were at that moment to take hold of a little chain attached to the machine, he would experience the strange sensation called an electrical shock; and if the quantity of fluid collected were very great, it would kill him instantly, as if he had been struck by lightning.

The great resemblance between an electrical shock and a stroke of lightning, led Dr. Franklin to think they must be the same thing; and in order to be sure of

it, he contrived a sort of kite, made of a large thin silk handkerchief, with a pointed wire and a key attached to it, and he sent his kite up during a thunder-storm. The pointed wire attracted the lightning from the clouds, and it was conveyed to the key; when the kite came down again, Dr. Franklin found that what the key had received from the clouds was really the electric fluid, with which he could make the same experiments as with that which he collected in the usual way with his machine. It therefore seems plain, that lightning is an effect of the electric fluid, and we may regard the clouds during a thunder-storm, as a magnificent electrical machine constructed by the great Creator.

In what a variety of ways the Almighty is pleased to manifest his power and goodness, in providing for the happiness of the creatures he has made! The longest life, the most diligent study, can only show us a small part of his works, a little portion of the wonders that surround us. To some animals he gives swiftness, to others strength, to others sagacity, that they may overtake, overcome, or elude, as their several habits require, and thus provide themselves with food, or escape from their enemies. As there are no limits to the goodness of God, so there are none to the admirable skill with which he has contrived to endue each animal with the powers best suited to it; if he deprives it of one

useful quality, he makes up for it by giving it another, better adapted to its habits. I am sure you will be surprised to hear that he has armed a fish, that would otherwise have been helpless and defenceless, with the mighty power of electricity.

This curious fish is called the *Gymnotus*, and also the *Electrical Eel*, because it has the power of giving an electric shock to any person who touches it, or any animal it wishes to attack. It is only met with in South America, and is an inhabitant of the Orinoco and some other large rivers; but in these, where the current is rapid and the water very deep, they are seldom caught or even seen, though the Indians sometimes feel

their shocks as they are bathing and swimming. In some parts of this country, where the roads are often crossed by rivers and there are no bridges over them, the mules, which are generally employed to carry burdens from one place to another, are accustomed to ford or swim across the streams. In one river, the Electrical Eels were so numerous, and they killed so many mules every year, that the natives were obliged to abandon the road, and go round another way.

The stagnant pools in the neighbourhood of Calabozo, a town on the banks of the river Guarica, abound with Gymnoti, and when M. Humboldt visited that place, he wished very much to get some of them. The Indians often promised to

catch them for him, and as often disappointed him. He soon found out the reason—the Indians were too much afraid of the Eels to try to catch them. At length, tired of waiting, he and his fellow-traveller determined to go themselves in search of these creatures.

The Indians led them to a stream, which in the dry season forms a pool of muddy water. Here there were plenty of Electrical Eels, but to catch them in nets was no very easy task, for these fish are so nimble that they quickly bury themselves in the mud, and the Indians said it would be better to "*fish with horses.*"

This strange manner of fishing raised the curiosity of our travellers not a little, and their guides set off to the Savannah

to find some wild horses and mules. They soon returned with about thirty, which they drove into the pool, and a most extraordinary combat began.

The splashing of the water, and the noise of the animals' feet, soon brought the Gymnoti out of the mud, and crowding under the bellies of their enemies, they gave them violent shocks. The terrified horses endeavoured to run away, but to prevent this, the Indians, armed with harpoons and long slender reeds, surrounded the pool, and climbed into the trees which overhung the water. By their wild cries and long reeds, they drove the horses back, and the battle continued. For some time it appeared as if the fish would prove victorious; several horses,

stunned by the violence of the shocks, fell down in the water and were drowned; others panting, with their manes erect, and their haggard eyes showing the pain they suffered, again tried to escape; and the few which were so happy as to reach the bank, in spite of the vigilance of the Indians, stumbled at every step, and, exhausted and benumbed, stretched themselves on the sand.

In less than five minutes two of the horses had been killed, and M. Humboldt expected to see all the others perish in their turn, but by degrees the Electrical Eels became exhausted, and their shocks grew much weaker. The horses and mules now appeared less frightened, and the wearied Gymnoti timidly approached.

the edge of the marsh, where the Indians caught them with small harpoons fastened to long cords. They had soon five large fishes, most of them very slightly wounded. When the Electrical Eel has thus spent itself, it requires a long rest and much food to restore its power of giving violent shocks, and in the mean time it may be taken up without danger: the natives say, that if the same pool is fished with horses for two days together, none are killed on the second day.

The Eels thus obtained were about five feet long, and of a fine olive-green colour, with two rows of small yellow spots along the back; the electrical organs extend the whole length of the fish, and fill more than two thirds of it. This

enables the *Gymnotus* to give the horses such dreadful shocks, as it can make its electrical discharge along the whole extent of the organ at once, as well as from any particular part of it. It is very foolish and rash to meddle with these creatures when they are just caught, if they have not been fatigued or wounded, for the first shocks of a large and irritated fish, occasion the most violent pain and numbness. Those upon which M. Humboldt and his friend now spent some hours in trying experiments, were, as I told you, exhausted by their contest with the horses before they ventured to touch them, and the shocks they received were therefore feeble, yet they felt the effects of them all the next day.

You may often touch these fishes

without feeling the least shock, for it depends entirely upon the inclination of the animal whether it will give one or not.

When M. Humboldt took hold of the tail of an Electrical Eel, and his friend of its head or the middle of its body, while they avoided touching each other, one of them received shocks which the other did not feel, for the Eel directs its electrical stroke to the point where it feels itself irritated. So remarkably nice is its power of doing this, that even when they touched its body with their fingers, at the distance of only one inch from each other, and both pressed the creature at the same moment, sometimes one and sometimes the other felt the shock.

If two persons take hold of each other's

hands, and only *one* of them touches the fish, the shock is generally felt by both at the same moment; sometimes, however, it happens that in the most painful shocks, the person who actually touches the Eel, is alone sensible of them. When the persons who thus form a chain both touch the fish, the shock is often very strong. Sometimes as many as eight or ten people have received a stroke together, by standing in a circle with their hands joined, and the first touching the head of the Eel, while the last took hold of its tail. Once, those who were trying this experiment, placed a dog among them, making him form one link of the chain, and at the moment the rest felt the shock he uttered a loud yell.

The presence of the *Gymnotus* is dreaded by all the other inhabitants of the water. We are told that frogs, lizards, and tortoises abandon the pools where it is found, and seek those in which its absence offers the prospect of a more secure abode. The Indians who sometimes catch these Eels and young alligators in the same net, say that the *Gymnoti* have never been found wounded by the formidable teeth of their companions, because they stun the young alligators by their shocks before they have time to attack them.

One of these wonderful creatures was sent to a gentleman who lived in Sweden, and he kept it for more than four months in a tub. It was very tame, and was

generally fed with boiled meat. I believe, in its wild state, the *Gymnotus* feeds on small fishes, and, as it has no teeth, its curious electrical power seems to have been given to it as a means of securing its prey, as well as of defending itself from the attacks of its enemies. If small fishes were put into the tub of this tame Eel, it would stun and then swallow them whole. One day, when a fish was thrown in, the Eel swam up to it and retreated without doing it any harm; presently however it returned and darted a shock, which made it turn on its back and become motionless. Another fish not being quite killed by the first stroke, the Eel gave it a second and more severe one. The *Gymnotus* does not always

touch the fish to which it gives the shock; it is able to direct its electrical stroke from a distance, and the shock reaches the object through the medium of the water. A gentleman who held his hand in the water between the Eel and the fish against which the stroke was directed, felt a strong shock.

The shocks have sometimes been felt through the vessels which contained these creatures. A servant who was one day employed to empty the water out of a tub in which one of them was kept, received such a violent stroke that he let it fall: another came to his assistance, and they lifted the tub between them; but even then, while they were pouring out the rest of the water, the Eel gave them

both such a strong shock, that they were obliged to leave off. M. Humboldt tells us that he felt violent shocks while carrying one of them in a wet pot made of clay; and that his friend, who used for the same purpose two dry cords composed of the fibres of the palm-tree, felt them, though not so strongly.

Many stories are told of the effects produced by their shocks on persons who have attempted to touch or take up these fishes. M. Humboldt himself was once so imprudent as to put both his feet on a *Gymnotus* that was just taken out of the water; and he suffered violent pain for the rest of the day, not only in his knees, but in almost every other joint.

Another gentleman, who was resolved

on accomplishing his purpose, made twenty different attempts to take one up in his hand, but in vain; for at every trial he received a severe shock which reached to his shoulder, and he was compelled to desist. I dare say he was vexed at his want of success, but to have persisted would have been very rash, for I have heard that a poor Negro who once tried to hold a large fish firmly in his hands, lost the use of both his arms, and remained a cripple for the rest of his life.

I told you it was dangerous to touch these fishes when they are first taken out of the water, and the natives, who are aware of this, are very careful not to meddle with them. An English sailor,

however, who one day saw an Electrical Eel caught in a net, insisted upon taking it up as it lay on the grass. Those who were standing by earnestly entreated him to let it alone, but the foolish man would not listen to the advice of those who knew better than himself. The moment he grasped the fish, his eyes became fixed, his face turned pale, and he dropped down in a fit. It was with difficulty that he was brought to his senses again, and when he was able to speak, he said, that “the cold ran swiftly up his arm into his body, and pierced him to the heart.”

Humboldt's Personal Narrative.
Bingley's Animal Biography.

THE BEAR.

MANY of the wild animals with which we are acquainted are inhabitants of particular countries; the Jaguar is found in South America, the royal Tiger in India, and the Chamois dwells among the rocky precipices of the Alps and Pyrenees; others, like the Wolf and the Otter, are met with in various parts of the world; but each creature, wherever it is found, generally displays the same qualities, and subsists in the same manner as the rest of its species. The Bear is one of those animals which are not peculiar to any country: he is a native of Europe,





Page 96

The Bear.

Asia, and America, but, unlike most other wild beasts, his disposition and habits vary exceedingly.

We usually hear of the Bear as a savage and solitary animal, which takes up his abode in the deepest and least frequented parts of the forest, or the most inaccessible caves of the mountain. His form is uncouth, and his motions awkward and unwieldy, but, from the sharpness and length of his claws, he possesses the advantage of being able to climb trees either in pursuit of prey, or to escape an enemy. In the winter the Bears retire to their dens, where they pass the time in repose, and without food, so that although they are extremely fat before they disappear, they come

out of their retreats in the spring lean and famished.

In Lapland the natives call the Bear the king of the forest, and they wage perpetual war against him for the sake of his flesh and warm shaggy fur. Perhaps there may be another reason for this hostility. He is the enemy of the reindeer, which are so valuable to the Laplander, and prized beyond all his possessions ; and although their remarkable swiftness generally enables them to make their escape, the smaller domestic animals of the natives often become victims to the rapacity of these savage devourers.

The chase of the Bear is one of the most important events of a Laplander's life : he values himself exceedingly upon

his success, and wears little tufts of the hair in his bonnet, as tokens of the number he has killed. When one of these creatures is discovered, the hunters assemble and consult upon the mode of attack. They arm themselves with arrows, lances, guns, and sticks, and the person who best knows the way, marches first and conducts the rest to the den of the Bear. While they are attacking him the hunters all sing, and are simple enough to entreat the Bear not to hurt them, or break their weapons. After the animal is killed, his body is carried on a sledge to a hut built for the purpose of dressing it, and the whole day is spent in feasting and rejoicing.

It often happens that when a Laplander

is hunting birds or squirrels, his dog comes unexpectedly upon the winter retreat of a Bear. As soon as the man is aware of this from the barking of his dog, he cuts off the branches of the neighbouring fir-trees, and while the creature is lying quietly at rest, he stops up with the boughs the entrance of the den, leaving only a small hole for the Bear to put his head through. Armed with an axe the Laplander then takes his station in front of the cave, and tries by every means in his power to irritate the animal within, and induce him to come out and attack his assailant. Roused by this unprovoked outrage, the Bear at length rises, and fiercely thrusts his head through the narrow opening left by the hunter,

who seizes the opportunity, and gives him a mortal blow with his axe.

In the north-eastern part of Asia, there is a peninsula called Kamtschatka: a chain of mountains extends the whole length of the country, from both sides of which many rivers descend and fall into the sea. Here Bears are so numerous, that they would long ago have desolated the country, had they been as savage as those of most other parts of the world. But the Bears of Kamtschatka are so tame and gentle, that women and girls may be often seen gathering roots and herbs, or turf for fuel, in the midst of a whole drove of these animals, without meeting with the least interruption; indeed they are so little disposed to hurt

any one; that if a Bear should approach them, it is only to eat something out of their hands.

In the winter the Bears retire to the mountains, and when the spring returns, come down in multitudes to feed on the fish in the rivers. If there is abundance of this favourite food they will eat only the heads of the fishes; and sometimes when they find the nets set by the fishermen, they will contrive to drag them to the shore and feast upon the spoil.

Not only are the inhabitants never molested by these harmless creatures, but they acquire a vast deal of knowledge from them. In every country there may be found a variety of herbs and plants which are very useful as medicines, and

by watching what herbs the Bears apply to the wounds they have received, and the methods they adopt when they appear weak and ill, the Kamtschadales have learnt almost all they know of the simple remedies within their reach. For one of their amusements they are also indebted to the Bears: the favourite dance of this people is called the *Bear-dance*, and consists of an imitation of the various gestures of the animal; they mimic his stupid and sluggish walk, the sports of the young around their dams, and their agitation when pursued; and we are told that the more exactly a Kamtschadale can copy the Bear, the better dancer he is esteemed.

The harmless and sociable character

of the Kamtschadale Bear, does not however protect him from the attacks of the natives. To them he is a most valuable prize, and you would hardly imagine the various uses they can make of him after his death. His flesh is thought a great delicacy by all the inhabitants of the peninsula, and they melt the fat, which answers the purpose of oil. Of the skin they make beds, caps, gloves, and collars for the dogs which they employ to draw their sledges over the snow; and those hunters who go upon the ice in search of seals, make the soles of their shoes of it, that they may not slip. Part of the inside of the animal is transparent, and is used by the Russians who live in Kamtschatka for the windows of their

log houses, instead of glass. The women make masks of the same substance, to preserve their faces from the effects of the sun's rays, which are said, when reflected from the snow, to blacken the skin. Of the shoulder-bones sickles are formed for cutting the grass, and the heads are hung up as ornaments on the trees near their dwellings.

The Kamtschadale hunter, armed only with a spear or club, will often go alone to seek for the retreat of the Bear, who is far from suspecting any hostile purpose on the part of his visitor, and intent only upon self-defence and the security of his dwelling. The man commences his attack by offering the animal faggots, which he gravely takes from his enemy,

and closes up with them the entrance to his den. The Bear may think by this means to ensure his safety from any assault during his winter's repose, but the hunter, when he is thus safely housed, soon makes a small hole at the top of the cave, and dispatches him with his spear.

These people, among other methods of taking the Bear, sometimes adopt a very cruel one. They put in his way a board driven full of iron hooks. When the animal steps upon it, he feels his paw wounded, and tries to push the board away with the other foot. This is caught too, and, roaring with pain, he rises on his hind legs ; the board, which sticks to his fore feet, is thus lifted up before his eyes, and

he becomes so perplexed, that he throws himself on the ground, and his rage and struggles at length destroy him.

Various contrivances and snares are used in different countries to destroy these creatures. Bears are remarkably fond of honey, and the Russians, knowing this, when they find a tree in which there are wild bees, suspend a heavy log of wood by a string to one of the branches. When a Bear climbs the tree to get at the hive, he finds himself stopped by the log, which he pushes away, and in swinging back again it gives him a blow; this puts the animal in a rage, he throws it from him with greater violence than before, and it consequently returns with more force and gives a harder blow. Not

having the sense to understand that his throwing the log from him is the cause of the blows he receives, the Bear, as his fury increases, continues fiercely pushing it away until he is either killed by the blows, or falls exhausted from the tree.

In Germany the Bear is often caught in a pit, loosely covered with sticks or turf, among which a pot of honey is placed as a bait. This proves an irresistible attraction to him, and he eagerly approaches it; the slight and treacherous covering gives way beneath his weight, and he falls into the snare.

The Bears of Hungary partake of the peaceable nature of those of Kamtschatka. The children who go into the woods to gather cranberries have never been

hurt by them, though, as these animals feed on such fruits, they might be expected not to like the intrusion. The peasants there say, that at night they sometimes leave the woods and come into the corn-fields to feed, where they rub the ears of corn between their fore-paws, blow away the chaff, and eat the grain.

They are also very fond of peas, which they will contrive to beat out of the pods against a stone, or some hard spot of ground; and they not only devour the seeds, but carry off the straw to their dens.

The Bears of this country have never been known to injure any one who has not first given them some provocation. They are said to be remarkably attached

to each other, and the hunters never dare to fire at a young one in the presence of its dam ; for should it happen to be killed, she will certainly revenge its death, or perish in the attempt. If instead of the cub the mother should be shot, her young one will remain by her side long after she is dead, showing marks of the greatest affliction.

Pinkerton's Voyages and Travels.
Bingley's Animal Biography.
Foreign Field Sports.

THE STAG.

NATURALISTS have divided the various animals with which they are acquainted into tribes or families, distinguished from each other by some peculiarities of form. These tribes contain many separate species resembling the rest of the family to which they belong in some respects, and, at the same time, differing widely in others. For instance, the majestic Elk of the American forests, and the delicate Roe-buck of Scotland, which is sometimes little more than two feet in height, are both numbered among the Stag or Deer family. The distinguishing mark

of this tribe is in the antlers with which the head of the male animal is armed: the female, except among the Rein-deer, is always without them.

There are but few things in the animal creation more curious than the singular growth and succession of the horns of the Stag. When they begin to bud, the first appearance is like a slight swelling under the skin, and if you were to touch it, it would feel hot, from the number of little vessels ready to expand and form the antler. The swelling goes on increasing till it shoots forth in a horn, which assumes in each animal the shape peculiar to its kind. After a certain time the horn has arrived at its full size, and the skin which had stretched with its



growth, and till now covered the antler, dies, becomes dry, and tears off in rags : this last process is sometimes hastened by the animals themselves, who rub off the loose skin, and polish their horns against the trees. At length the horn, after having lasted for its usual time, becomes loose and drops off: the skin attached to it bleeds a little, but in four-and-twenty hours the place is healed, and the production of a new horn immediately commences.

Many of the Deer tribe have new horns every year, and the form is always the same in animals of the same sort, but those of one species differ widely from those of another.

It has been observed that the horns of

the Deer which inhabit cold countries, are differently shaped from those of warmer climates. They are of a flattened or hand-like form, and appear intended to assist them in clearing away the snow from their food ; and it is a curious fact, that the colder the country is in which Deer are found, the better are their horns fitted for this use. Thus the Rein-deer of America have much broader and flatter horns than those of Lapland, for the snows they have to contend with are much deeper. Besides these natural shovels, the feet of these animals are broad to answer the double purpose of giving them a firmer footing on the snow and of scraping it away. How plainly in these particulars may we trace the

wisdom and goodness of the Creator, and see an instance of the various methods by which different animals are made capable of providing for their wants, and fitted for the climate in which they live.

The *Elk* or *Moose Deer* of America, is the largest of this tribe, being higher than our horses. When seen wild in its native forests, and in all the glory of its full grown antlers, it is a noble looking creature, though it does not equal some other species in beauty. Its horns are so large and heavy, that in order to support their weight, its neck is thick and short. The head is long and narrow, the ears resemble those of an ass, and the neck is clothed with a heavy mane. Its motions are awkward, though its legs

are long and well formed, for, owing to its standing higher before than behind, it cannot gallop, but shuffles or ambles along. As it moves its joints make a crackling noise like those of the Reindeer; this noise was for some time thought to have been occasioned by the hoofs snapping against each other, till it was heard when the feet were not lifted from the ground, and the animal merely turned or leaned on one side.

In the winter the Elk lives chiefly among woody hills, seeking shelter during the snow-storms in thick coverts: its food then consists of the mosses which it finds under the snow, and the buds and bark of various trees, the branches of which it turns down by means of its

horns with great dexterity. The Huron and Canadian hunters say, that when the snow has been one or two feet deep, they have seen a herd of these animals, led by an old male, shovel it back with their broad flat horns, and throw it over their heads; at the same time striking with their fore-feet to clear it away from beneath them.

The Elk generally drops his horns in January or February, and they are fully grown again by the end of June. They are his weapons of defence against bears and wolves; his feet are also used by him in fighting, and it is said his kick is so powerful that it will split a small tree.

In North America the Elk is hunted

in the early part of winter or towards the spring. The hunters wait till the snow is deep and begins to harden, so that they can run over it in snow-shoes; they then pursue the Elks, and drive them towards ravines, or wherever the snow is deeply drifted. The Huron Indians say that if this can be accomplished, the animal is soon entangled by floundering in the snow; but this chase requires great dexterity on the part of the hunters, for if they do not run instantly upon the deep snow themselves, and fire at the Elk as he turns, he will rush back, and attack every one he finds in his way.

The *Rein-deer* are also, as you have heard, inhabitants of cold countries; and

in Lapland, where they abound, they form the wealth, and supply most of the comforts of the natives. Fitted by nature for subsisting in this barren country, these useful creatures feed on lichens, the buds of pine-trees, and other arctic plants. Besides the various uses to which their skin, flesh, and horns are applied by the Laplander, they supply him with milk; and two of them yoked to a sledge will whirl him over the snow with such swiftness, that he can travel with them a hundred miles in a day. In common with the rest of the Deer tribe, and many other animals, they have a nictitating or winking membrane, which covers nearly half the ball of the eye, and protects it from accidental injury.

while the creature is feeding. In the *Rein-deer* this membrane is very moveable, and is particularly useful to it in storms of sleet and snow. This greatly contributes to the wonderful exactness with which they find their way through dangerous passes, and in a stormy night; and accidents very seldom happen, though the Laplander continually trusts his life to their sagacity.

Perhaps it is from observing the advantage of this curious membrane to the Rein-deer, that the Esquimaux have invented their *snow-eyes*, which are a kind of spectacles made of very thin pieces of wood. They are so contrived as to protect the eye in the same way as the membrane, and shield it from the glare of the

snow, by leaving only a narrow slit to look through.

Rein-deer are excellent swimmers: their broad feet are very useful in the water, as well as on the snow, and, striking with great force, enable them to swim so rapidly in the strongest currents, and across the broadest rivers, that a well manned boat can hardly keep up with them.

Both in their wild and domestic state, the Rein-deer live in large herds, and always follow implicitly the guidance of an old male. The herdsman is accustomed to direct him by a whistle, and he, with a look or a stamp of his foot, will make the rest obey with wonderful docility. In the summer they are greatly

tormented by insects, especially by a kind of gad-fly which lays its eggs in their skin, and the hum of one of these on the wing is sufficient to put a whole herd to flight. The natives are therefore obliged to drive them in the day-time to the higher parts of the mountains, whence they are brought home evening and morning to be milked, when a large fire of moss is lighted, that the smoke may keep away their persecutors.

The proper or *Common Stag*, is found in every European country except Lapland. In England they once abounded, but are now nearly extinct, though a few are still remaining in Gloucestershire and Devon. The size of the horns vary according to age and circumstances. The

Stags of Germany, when the country was well wooded, and they had consequently a greater abundance of food and repose, were sometimes found with an astonishing number of antlers or branches on their horns. The first king of Prussia killed one which had thirty-three antlers on each.

Hunting the Stag has been a favourite amusement in every age and country, and to excel in it required great experience and attention. As cautious and vigilant as he is swift, the Stag, before he leaves the wood, carefully views the open country; and when he retires to his resting-place, that he may not be traced by his scent, he will pass the spot, return upon his track, and then

spring off with a bound to his retreat.

The Hind is exceedingly attached to her young one, and carefully conceals it in close coverts. To preserve it, she will expose herself to the fury of the hounds, and allow them to chase her, that they may be drawn away from its hiding-place. She will also defend it with great courage against the wild animals of the forest, and even the wolf is sometimes successfully resisted by her on these occasions.

The Fawn never leaves its dam during the summer; and in the winter the Stags and Hinds of all ages collect together in large herds, which become more and more numerous as the season increases in severity. On the return of

spring they separate, and while the Hinds are attending to their young, the Stags are likewise in concealment, shedding and regaining their horns.

The *Canadian Stag* or *Wapiti* is remarkable for the immense size of its horns, which expand so rapidly that at one period they grow more than an inch and a half in a day. Some have been seen nearly five feet long, and these monstrous appendages are not without their use to the Canadian Stag; for when a small dead pine-tree, or the bar of a fence, though it should be fifteen or sixteen feet long, lies in his way, he has been known to lift it up with his horns, and fairly toss it over his back.

In the summer the Wapiti often feeds

on the plants that grow at the bottom of the water, in which he seeks refuge from the bites of flies. It was while feeding in this singular manner that some travellers obtained a view of the animal. They were ascending a river in a canoe, and at a spot where it suddenly turned and opened into a small lake, a hunter, who was of the party, made a signal for silence, and pointed a-head of the canoe. The travellers looked, but saw nothing; some of the men, however, understanding the meaning of the sign, seized their guns. The noise they made in their haste alarmed the Stag, which immediately lifted his head above the water: and, seeing the canoe, sprang towards the bank with his mouth full of weeds. The

men fired, but he reached the shore, and, tossing his antlers, dashed into the thicket unhurt.

The Wapiti, however, are often shot while feeding in this way under water; but then the canoe must be placed so as to glide silently down the current till it is close to them, for when they raise their heads from time to time to breathe, they take no notice of any object which does not appear to move.

There is a great variety of beautiful creatures of the Stag kind, which are peculiar to Asia, and some that are only found in America; but I think it would interest you more to hear a few particulars of those which are met with in our own country.

The Deer which you have sometimes seen in parks are *Fallow Deer*, and you know how beautifully their brown sides are marked with white spots, and how swiftly they vanish among the trees when they take alarm at the near approach of man. It is said that a herd will sometimes divide, and that repeated battles will take place between the parties for the possession of some favourite spot in the park.

In appearance the Fallow Deer greatly resemble the Common Stag, but the form of their antlers is different, and they are smaller and more delicate: they may also be more easily tamed. When these Deer are thirsty, they plunge their noses very deep into the water while drinking, and

remain in that situation a considerable time. This they could not do but for the assistance of two small breathing places, one at the inner corner of each eye, which the animal can open or shut at pleasure. This curious provision of nature is probably very useful to the Deer when running, as throwing open these additional nostrils would enable it to breathe more freely, and thus contribute to its escape when pursued.

The smallest of all the European Deer is the *Roebuck*, which is extremely graceful and active. Like most animals of this tribe, he has a fine full eye; his limbs are remarkably pliant, and he leaps with great ease. From the strong scent which he leaves on the grass, he is

peculiarly exposed to the pursuit of dogs, but often baffles them by the instinct with which he is endowed. When hunted, he will first dash forward, and immediately *double*, or run back on the same path, to mislead the hounds, and then by some long leaps gain a thicket, where he will lie concealed till the chase has passed by.

Unlike other Stags, the Roebuck does not live in herds, but each family by itself. There are only a few now in England, but many remain in Scotland, and there they do some damage in the forests by biting off the young shoots and buds of the trees, which they prefer to grass. They are so distrustful, that it is said no art can tame them.

Some years ago, a Roebuck, pursued by hunters, fled from Scotland into Cumberland. It was chased through that county and several parts of the north of England, and at last took refuge among the woods on the banks of the Tyne, near Prudhoe Castle. Here it was often seen, and often hunted, but no dogs could be found equal to it in swiftness: it frequently swam across the river, and by speed or artifice escaped the pursuers. At length, in a severe winter, the river was frozen, and the Roebuck, being chased, crossed it on the ice; it was much strained by its violent exertions, and taken alive. For some weeks it was kept in the house, but when it was set at liberty, it soon came to an untimely

end, for all its cunning and skill seemed to have forsaken it; it appeared to have forgotten its old haunts, and after running for some time, laid down in a brook, where it was killed by the dogs.

Cuvier's Animal Kingdom by Griffith.

Bewick's Natural History of Quadrupeds.

White's Natural History of Selbourne.

THE SHEEP.

THERE is a vast difference between those animals which are kept by men in a domesticated state, and others of the same species which are left to the enjoyment of their native freedom. It has been observed that the less intercourse they have with mankind, the more perfect are their instincts; and while we find less courage and more helplessness in the tame, the wild animal exults in the full possession of all the senses and faculties needful for its preservation.

Sheep are found wild on the most inaccessible mountains of all the four quarters

of the world, and in this state are not inferior to the goat in strength, hardihood, or enterprise. They always live in flocks, more or less numerous according to the nature of the country, and abundance of the pasturage.

The largest of the Sheep kind is the *Argali*; the male of which is not much smaller than a stag, being three feet high at the shoulder. It has very large horns, sometimes they are nearly four feet long, and the width is so great at the base, that young foxes are said to shelter themselves in the hollow of such as are accidentally found on the ground. This curious animal is a native of the elevated *steppes* or plains of Siberia, and the loftiest mountains of the central parts





The American Argali.

of Asia. They are so strong and active, and fly so quickly from the least appearance of danger, that it is very difficult to get within gun-shot of them. Like the domestic Sheep, however, they have a great deal of curiosity, and if they are shot it is generally while they pause, in fancied security, to look from some lofty crag on the dogs beneath them, for then the skilful hunter can steal upon them unperceived.

The American Argali are in appearance and manners exceedingly like those found in Asia. They live in troops of thirty or forty, headed by an old Ram, and show the same agility in bounding along the steepest parts of the mountains. The Argali are only met with in the

north western regions of America, never having been seen farther south than California, or to the east of the Rocky Mountains. From this circumstance, and the great resemblance they bear to the Asiatic species, it is supposed that they are of the same race, and have reached the New World by crossing the ice at Behring's Straits.

The Sheep of some parts of Wales are, from the mountainous nature of the country, half wild. Here they may be seen scattered among the rocks in small groups of twelve or fourteen, while one of them stands like a sentinel, on some projecting peak, to give warning on the approach of any danger, which it does by a hissing noise. When the signal is

heard, all take refuge together on the most inaccessible part of the mountain.

There is a curious fact related of the Glamorganshire Sheep, which is said to be well known to the farmers of that neighbourhood. If a flock of these Sheep is sold and carried into Brecknockshire, the county just to the north of that in which they have been bred, their owners are obliged to watch them carefully, for they say that when the wind is from the south *they smell it*, and as if they knew and remembered their native air, immediately attempt to escape. They have sometimes been seen on the top of the highest eminences, turning up their noses and apparently snuffing the gale; and after standing a little while, if not pre-

vented, they will scour along the waste, and never stop until they have reached their former homes.

In their domestic state these animals are not by any means devoid of intelligence. Dr. Hancock tells us that instances have been known of a single Sheep returning to a former place of abode, though it has had in its way to pass through towns and to cross rivers. This was the case with one which was driven from Scotland into Yorkshire, and actually succeeded in revisiting its native hills in Annandale. Another, which found its way back from Perthshire to a farm not far from Edinburgh, displayed a remarkable degree of instinct. When it reached Stirling, it happened to be a

fair day, and instead of venturing into the crowded streets, it rested on the north side of the town till the fair was over, and then came through in the dusk of the evening.

One of the wonderful things we hear of in the brute creation, is the power they have of imparting to each other a knowledge of their wants, and this too sometimes happens between animals of different kinds. Some gentlemen once witnessed a curious instance of this as they were taking an afternoon walk on a hill near Coventry. They observed several Sheep standing round the head of a cow, and looking intently at her as she was quietly grazing. The fixed attitude of the Sheep attracted the attention of the gentlemen; and as they came up, the

cow suddenly raised her head, and the Sheep opened a passage for her to pass through them. She had not walked a dozen yards before she reached a large Ewe which had fallen over on her back, and was unable to rise. The cow gently placed her horns under the side of the poor animal, and gave a slight toss so dexterously, that the Ewe was immediately enabled to get upon her feet; the two animals then quietly walked away, and in the mean time the other Sheep which had attracted the attention of the cow to the situation of their companion, had dispersed.

Sheep are naturally courageous animals, and in the mountainous parts of England they have been known to attack and kill dogs or foxes. The peculiar hardness of their forehead, enables

them to butt with great force, and in their wild state, when threatened with danger, the Rams of the flock will form a line in front of the females and young ones, and boldly face the enemy. When thus united and prepared for resistance, neither lion nor tiger can withstand their impetuosity and force.

They are also very affectionate; and those who have observed them in shearing time, have remarked the correct knowledge they have of each other's voices. When the mother is released by the shearer, her peculiar bleat immediately attracts her young one, and though, when it first bounds up to her, her altered appearance startles it a little, her well-known voice soon reassures it, and it resumes its wonted gambols round her.

In the Scriptures the Sheep is often mentioned, and is the subject of several beautiful parables. In one of these, some of the customs of the Eastern shepherds are alluded to, and perhaps you do not know that the same customs exist in those countries to this day. When our Saviour is speaking of His people, under the emblem of Sheep, He says, that the shepherd *calleth his own sheep by name*, and that *the sheep follow him for they know his voice*. A gentleman, lately travelling in Greece, as he passed a flock of Sheep in his morning walk, asked the shepherd if it was usual in Greece to give names to the Sheep, who replied that it was, and that the Sheep obeyed the shepherd when he called them by their names. He asked the man to

call one of his Sheep, and when he did so, it immediately left its pasture and companions, and ran up to the shepherd with signs of pleasure, and such ready obedience, as the gentleman had never before seen in any animal. It is also true of these Sheep that *a stranger they will not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers.* The shepherd said that many of his Sheep were still *wild*, for they had not yet learned their names, but that by teaching they would all learn them; the others, which knew their names, he called *tame*. What a picture of the human race does this account of the Sheep present to us! *The good Shepherd* has laid down His life for His Sheep; but many of them are still wild, and do not know

his voice. Others have learned to obey His call, and to follow Him. How desirable that we should all be of that happy number! May you be led to seek an entrance into His fold, and become one of His little flock! He is a very compassionate Shepherd; and for your encouragement has said, *Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Cuvier's Animal Kingdom by Griffith.
Hancock on Instinct.*

Britton and Brayley's Beauties of England and Wales.

Hartley's Journal.

THE END.



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